

Revelation Chapter Three

Letter to Sardis (vv. 1-6)

Address and Attributes of the Speaker (v.1)

VERSE 1 "To the messenger of the church in Sardis write (Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Σάρδεσιν ἐκκλησίας γράψον [*conj kai + art.w/dat.m.s. angelos + art.w/noun gen.f.s. ekklesia + prep en w/art. w/loc.f.p. Zardeis, ancient capital of Lydia in western Turkey + aor.act.imper.2s grapho write*]): **He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says these things:** [Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἔχων τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας [*pro.acc.nt.p. tode this, points to something that is going to be said + pres.act.ind.3s. lego say + art.w/pres.act.part.nom.m.s. echo have + art.w/adj.acc.nt.p. hepta seven + noun acc.nt.p. pneuma spirit + art.w/noun gen.m.s. theos God + conj kai + art.w/noun acc.m.p. aster star + adj.acc.m.p. hepta seven*]] **'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead** [Οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα ὅτι ὄνομα ἔχεις ὅτι ζῆς, καὶ νεκρὸς εἶ [*pf.act.ind.1s. oida know + pro.ge.2s. su + art.w/noun acc.nt.p. erga work + conj hoti that + noun acc.nt.s onoma name + pres.act.ind.2s. echo have + conj hoti that + pres.act.ind.2s. zao be alive + conj kai "but"; "and yet" + adj.nom.m.s. nekros dead + pres.act.ind.2s. eimi "are"*]]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 1

1. The standard address follows with a new city introduced.
2. Sardis was located thirty-three miles south of Thyatira.
3. Sardis was situated on one of the alluvial hills that formed a transition from the Hermus plain to the higher elevation of Mount Tmolus.
4. Each of these hills was shaped like an elongated plateau with steep sides.
5. They terminated in the north in a sharp point and on the south in the neck of land that connected them to Mount Tmolus.
6. Such a location made Sardis an almost impregnable natural fortress.
7. The small neck of land to the south provided the only access to the city, but even this was steep, tedious, and winding climb, and so the city was easily defensible.
8. The other sides of the city were smooth rock walls that were almost perpendicular, dropping down to the plain, 1500 feet below.
9. This provided an ideal stronghold.
10. At the same time, it limited the growth of the city.
11. The city appears to have begun when the Lydian kingdom began around 1200 BC.
12. Sardis apparently was called Hyde during the early days of the kingdom while serving as its capital.

13. As the civilization grew larger and more complex, the elevated plateau on which the city was built was too small to serve as a capital, so a lower city was built on the western and northern sides of the original city.
14. The old city served as an acropolis.
15. Because of the great difference in altitude, the new city was in sharp contrast to the old.
16. Since it was a double city, its name was pluralized, Σάρδεσιν, like that of Athens [*Athenai*] and some other places.
17. Being the capital of Lydia, Sardis had a history of frequent wars.
18. Whoever controlled Sardis controlled Lydia.
19. In this role Sardis was pre-eminent in the eyes of the more Hellenistic cities of Asia to the west as the Oriental enemy in whose hands their fate rested.
20. Most of them engaged Sardis in warfare and lost.
21. It was a great, wealthy, impregnable city over which victory was practically impossible.
22. In the ongoing rivalry between Asia and Europe it represented Asia, and the Greek colonies toward the coast to the west represented Europe.
23. Sardis was an enemy of those Ionian cities.
24. After learning the Greek ways it conquered them and earned the reputation of “Sardis the First Metropolis of Asia and of Lydia, and of Hellenism,” a designation inscribed on their coins.
25. The Hellenism that developed in Sardis was distinctive.
26. To some degree it modified Asia, but in other ways this Greek spirit was modified.
27. This Hellenism was not a racial type, but a kind of aspiration and aims.
28. It reflected itself in a consciousness of individualism and in social and political structures (Ramsay).
29. By the middle of the sixth century BC, the city attained such a high level of respect that when its downfall came at the hands of a little-known enemy the Greek cities received the news of it with disbelief.
30. Despite an alleged warning against self-confidence by the Greek god he consulted, Croesus the king of Lydia initiated an attack Cyrus the king of Persia, but was soundly defeated.
31. Returning to Sardis to recoup and rebuild his army for another attack, he was promptly pursued by Cyrus who laid siege against Sardis.
32. Croesus felt secure in his city atop the acropolis and foresaw an easy victory over the Persian troops.
33. The Persians gained control of the acropolis by scaling the steep walls (549 BC).
34. So secure did the Sardians feel that they left the steep walls totally unguarded.
35. History repeated itself more than three and a half centuries later when Antiochus the Great conquered Sardis by utilizing the services of a mountain climber from Crete (195 BC).
36. His army entered by another approach while the defenders were content to guard the one known approach, the isthmus of land connected to Mount Tmolus.
37. In AD 17 a severe earthquake did much damage to the city.
38. Caesar Tiberius was very generous in his donations and help to rebuild the city.
39. Coinage with the inscription “Caesarian Sardis” reflects this episode in the city’s history.
40. The city built a temple to Empress Livia.
41. She was portrayed as the mother goddess and the emperor as her god-son (Ramsay).
42. By the time the Romans controlled Sardis, its greatness lay in the past.

43. The acropolis ceased functioning as an important part of the living city and was viewed merely as a historical relic.
44. Without the acropolis, Sardis' location had nothing to commend itself, and it was no longer inhabited.
45. The chief town in the district became Salikli, about five miles to the east in a more convenient situation for travelers and trade at the foot of Mount Tmolos.
46. When the Turks later settled in the Hermus Valley, the acropolis was restored as a fortress and remained so until Islam completely exterminated Christianity in this valley during the Middle Ages (Ramsay).
47. The modern city of Sart occupies the site of ancient Sardis.
48. In the prime of the Lydian Empire, its kings were quite wealthy.
49. Their riches accumulated through trade, agriculture, and the commerce of the East.
50. The accuracy of a legend about gold being discovered in the area is debated.
51. The early wealth of Sardis and the discovery of coinage made of gold-silver alloy give considerable credibility to the report (Hemer).
52. During the Roman period a semblance of the earlier wealth returned because of trade introduced due to the city's proximity to a junction of the Roman system of roads in the area.
53. The main industry of this period was the production of woolen goods.
54. It is said to be the first city to perfect the art of dyeing wool.
55. Jewelry found in the local cemeteries by archaeologists indicates that some of the source of the city's wealth may have been derived from this source.
56. Archaeological explorations that began in 1058 have disclosed the presence of an important Jewish synagogue in Sardis as early as the first half of the third century AD.
57. It cannot be insisted that synagogue existed there at the end of the first century AD, because the one discovered was constructed more than a century later.
58. It does, however, suggest that a large community of Jews lived there.
59. Other evidence indicates that the presence of such a community extended back to an earlier date than the writing of the Revelation and that it may have been a center of the Jewish Diaspora.
60. This confirmed by what Josephus says regarding the existence of a wealthy and influential Jewish community in this city.
61. Some evidence reflects the prominence of the imperial cult in Sardis.
62. Several inscriptions indicate this, including one with an excerpt "the city of the Sardians, twice temple-wardens, [honored?] the Emperor Caesar Aurelius Antoninus Verus Augustus."
63. After the earthquake of 17 AD a temple to emperor worship was erected.
64. The dominant religion of the city, however, appears to be that of the general Anatolian religious forms; a worship of the forces of nature, which were viewed as subject to death but also as having the power of self-reproduction.
65. There are abundant data to suggest the conclusion of preoccupation with the problems of death and immortality among these people.
66. The patron deity of the city was Cybele, a well-known goddess of the Anatolian variety, who elsewhere was known as Artemis (Ramsay).
67. Beginning in the fourth century BC, the city had a temple dedicated to this goddess.
68. Remains of this temple are still visible.

69. Pagan religions throughout the area attributed healing power to the their deities, but in Sardis special emphasis focused on the power to restore life to the dead.
70. This special power was connected with a hot springs about two miles from the city.
71. These springs were viewed as visible manifestations of the power of the god of the underworld, which was prominent in the local religious legend (Ramsay).
72. The founding of the local church in Sardis is not mentioned in the NT.
73. Perhaps its beginnings can be traced to the early fifties AD through the converts of the apostle Paul during his three years in Ephesus, a city fifty miles to the southwest.
74. What is known from the message is that the church had passed its prime, and, like the city in which it was located, its claim to fame lies in the past.
75. This congregation had grown indifferent to spiritual things.
76. This church along with the Laodiceans was among the worst of the seven.
77. The church was still well-thought of by many but their claim to fame outlived their past glory.
78. To the pastor-teacher and to the congregation Jesus introduces Himself as “the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.”
79. The “seven spirits of God” is a title for the plenary (full) ministry of God the Holy Spirit in connection with the present dispensation.
80. This identification is based on Zech.4:3,6 (cp. Rev.1:4; 4:5,6).
81. There is but one God the Holy Spirit but the number seven denotes absolute perfection and completeness.
82. That Christ “has” (or “holds”) the seven spirits symbolizes the doctrine of the procession of the Spirit from Christ (cf. Jn.14:16, 26; 15:26).
83. God the Holy Spirit serves the Son even as the Son serves the Father.
84. God the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and the Church of Jesus Christ came into being.
85. The ministries of God the Holy Spirit include: (1) conviction (Jn. 16:8-11); (2) regeneration (Jn.1:13; 3:3,5; Titus 3:5); (3) sealing ((2Cor.1:22; Eph.1:13; 4:30); (4) indwelling (Jn.7:37-39; Acts 11:16-16; Rom.5:5; 1Cor.2:12; 6:19); (5) baptizing (Acts 1:5; 1Cor.12:13; Eph.4:5); (6) imputation of the gifts (1Cor.12:11,18; 1Pet.4:10); (7) filling (Eph.5:18; cp. 1Jn.1:9); (8) teaching (Jn.16:12:15; 1Jn.2:27); (9) experiential sanctification (2Tim.1:14; Gal.3:3).
86. To the pastor and believers at Sardis the imagery conveys the both the blessings that were theirs through the HS and the neglect or abuse of the IHS.
87. This local body was guilty of quenching and grieving (Eph.4:30; 1Thess.5:19) God the HS to an extreme as indicated by the statement in this verse that they were “dead.”
88. The same Holy Spirit that indwelt each and every one of them for blessing was there to bring judgment against the temple of the body (cf. 1Cor.3:16,17).
89. Adjustment to the IHS is the basis for spiritual growth (function of GAP), function of the spiritual gifts, and production of SG3.
90. What the Lord “has” or “holds” they are in need of via Rebound/repentance.
91. The primary function of the 3rd Person of the Godhead is to testify through the local church the light of BD.
92. The light of the truth of BD was not shining brightly through this church as it once had.
93. The ministry of God the HS was negated by the negative volition of the majority.

94. The person most responsible for this condition must have been the pastor-teacher, hence the imagery of the seven stars held by Christ.
95. In 1:20 we learned that the seven stars held in Christ's right hand represent the messengers or pastors of the seven churches.
96. Here the speaker reverts to *echon* used earlier in 1:16 in place of the stronger *kraton* of 2:1.
97. If the pastor of Sardis was part of the problem then this imagery is both a comfort and a warning to him.
98. Christ has control and authority over the messenger of each bonafide assembly for good or for ill.
99. The lampstand of Sardis was not emitting the brilliance of BD due to failure in the pastor and in the sheep.
100. This self-designation takes on special importance in light of the fact that this church was in more serious condition in any so far.
101. Both here and at Ephesus Christ introduces Himself as the One who holds the seven stars (cf. 2:1).
102. The spiritual decline at Ephesus was similar but had not gone as far as at Sardis.
103. In both churches we can safely lay much of the blame on the P-T.
104. We move to the Lord's perfect knowledge of the corporate assembly.
105. "I know your works" indicates production whether divine or human good (called "dead works" in Heb.6:1).
106. The difference between an authorized action being divine good or dead works is whether or not 1Jn.1:9 has been applied.
107. Even in the sad state the church was in there were "works."
108. People do a variety of things to make a local church function even if it is the bare minimum.
109. There is no reason to suppose that there was no activity at Sardis although no doubt many applications languished.
110. This is because the teaching was but a skeleton of its once robust past.
111. It is the character of their works that is subject to Christ's criticism.
112. This is supported by the statement in v.2 which says, "for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God."
113. As stated this refers to a wide range of things that were not being done in the lives of these people due in part to the truncated teaching.
114. A contributing factor to this malaise was probably due to bad habits and resulting laziness.
115. Their spiritual plight was not the result of the existence of false teachers, as was the case at Pergamum and Thyatira.
116. There was a breakdown in execution of the Royal imperatives.
117. This downward spiral is seen in the exhortation of v.2: "strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die."
118. The lack of zeal and faith at Sardis affected their attitude towards the importance of the Rebound technique.
119. Indifference and sloppiness characterized them.
120. The conjunction "that" (*hoti*) introduces an object clause that inferentially states the substance of *sou ta erga* ("your deeds").
121. "Name" often refers to a proper name, but it has other well-established uses.
122. In Hellenistic Greek, it signified all that a name implies, such as rank, authority, reputation, and character.

123. The reputation of either the church corporately is in view here.
124. In their past they had a good reputation based on reality and not mere semblance.
125. The Christian churches near and far had not come to realize what the Lord knew to be the case.
126. The church was resting on its laurels.
127. The church at Sardis was viewed as it once was not as it had become.
128. The “name” or reputation of this church was “that you live.”
129. The second *hoti* clause states the perception among Christians in other places.
130. They considered the church to be alive spiritually.
131. But the One who walks among the lampstands knew the true condition of this church.
132. The words “and you are dead” speaks to temporal and operational deaths but particularly temporal death.
133. It is the pastor-teacher’s responsibility to keep the importance of Rebound before his flock at all times.
134. Perhaps the P-T at Sardis lost confidence in this all-important adjustment.
135. The result was human good rather than divine good.
136. Apart from the filling ministry of the HS in the live of the local church there is not effective pursuit of BD as it is God the HS that leads us into all truth.

Corporate Admonition and Warning (vv.2-3)

VERSE 2 Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to

die (γίνου γρηγορῶν καὶ στήρισον τὰ λοιπὰ ἃ ἔμελλον ἀποθανεῖν [*pres.dep.imper.2s. ginomai + pres.act.part.nom.m.2s. gregoreo keep awake; “Wake up” + conj kai + aor.act.imper.2s. sterizo strengthen, support + art.w/adj.acc.nt.p. loipos remaining; “the things that remain” + rel.pro.nom.nt.p. ho “that” + impf.act.ind.3p. mello be about + aor.act.infin. apothnesko die*]; **for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God** [ὁ γὰρ εὕρηκά σου τὰ ἔργα πεπληρωμένα ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ μου [*neg. ou + conj gar for + pf.act.ind.1s. ginosko find + pro.gen.2s. su + art.w/noun acc.nt.p. ergon work + pf.pass.part.acc.nt.p. pleroo be complete + prep enopion before, in the sight of + art.w/noun gen.m.s. theos God + pro.gen.1s. ego I; “My”*]).

VERSE 3 'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and

repent (μνημόνευε οὖν πῶς εἴληφας καὶ ἤκουσας καὶ τήρει καὶ μετανόησον [*pres.act.imper.2s. mnemoneuo remember, recall + conj oun therefore, “So” + adv pos what, how + pf.act.ind.2s. lambano receive + conj and + aor.act.ind.2s. akouo hear + conj and + pres.act.imper.2s. tereo keep, hold + conj and + aor.act.imper.2s. metanoceo repent, change one’s mind*]).

Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief (ἐὰν οὖν μὴ γρηγορήσης, ἦξω ὡς κλέπτης [*conj ean if + conj oun therefore = except; “Therefore if” + neg me not + aor.act.subj.2s. gregoreo be watchful, vigilant, alert + fut.act.ind.1s. eko arrive; “I will come” + conj hos as + noun nom.m.s. kleptes thief*]), **and you will not know at what hour I will come to you** [καὶ οὐ μὴ γινῶς ποίαν ὥραν ἦξω ἐπὶ σέ [*conj and + double neg ou me + aor.act.subj.2s. ginosko know + interrog.adj.acc.f.s what sort; almost equivalent here to tis + noun acc.f.s. hora hour + fut.act.ind.1s. eko arrive, come; used esp. in relation to events + prep epi upon, on + pro.acc.2s. su*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 2-3

1. Here we have the divine prescription for curing the corporate body’s spiritual malaise.
2. The first of five imperatives in vv. 2 and 3 is joined to a participle and should be translated “be watchful” rather than “wake up.”
3. The exhortation to watchfulness would carry special weight in Sardis because twice in its history the acropolis had fallen to the enemy due to lack of vigilance on the part of the defenders.
4. In 549 BC Cyrus captured the city by deploying a climber to work his way up a crevice on one of the nearly perpendicular walls of the mountain fortress.
5. Late in the third century the city was again captured in the same way.
6. A Cretan by the name of Lagoras discovered a vulnerable point and with a band of fifteen men made a daring ascent, opened the gates from within, and followed the armies of Antiochus the Great to overpower the rebel Archaeus (216 BC).
7. As in history, so in life, to consider oneself secure and fail to remain alert is to court disaster.
8. Both tragedies could have been averted through even a minimal amount of watchfulness, but there was none.
9. The same was on the horizon for the Christian church at the hands of the Lord Himself.
10. A quick return to vigilance was needed.
11. Although the church at Sardis was dead (v.1), some things still remained (although on the verge of dying).
12. The two statements “you are dead” and “strengthen the things which remain” are actually paradoxical.
13. Although Sardis could be pronounced dead, it still had the possibility of restoration to life.
14. The church is exhorted to “strengthen the things that remain.”
15. This is a reference to spiritual truth that is still believed and understood.
16. “The things which remain” refer to doctrines which were being neglected and “were about to die.”
17. “The things which remain” carries the force of “that which survives,” a rather unusual meaning that is paralleled in Rev. 8:13; 9:20; 11:13.
18. The first order of business after assuming a posture of watchfulness was to strengthen worthwhile elements of their healthy past.
19. Again, these things refer to specific doctrines that were on the verge of dying out in the collective memory.

20. Being neuter gender, it refers to those spiritual verities, which in their current deadly slumber are not quite extinct.
21. This church was capable of once again erecting the impressive spiritual fortress of bygone days.
22. The strengthening is accomplished by vigorous teaching of the fundamentals of the faith (cp. Lk. 22:32).
23. All of this has to start with the messenger of the local church (cf. Rom.1:11; 1Thess.3:2; 2Pet. 1:12 cp. Rom.16:25; 1Thess.3:13; 1Pet.5:10).
24. This in will clear up the problem of their truncated works (cf. 2Thess.2:17).
25. Like the unfinished temple of Artemis within their city, the words of the church constantly fell short of the divine standard.
26. This can be traced back to the abbreviated and neglected teaching ministry of the pulpit.
27. Here operational death was primarily the consequence of the sub par teaching.
28. Operational death is also the result of being merely a hearer and not a doer of doctrine.
29. The corporate divine good production of a local church is no better than the information coming from the pulpit.
30. The specific works and the way manner in which they are carried out depend on setting them before the local church through verse by verse teaching (cf. 2Tim.2:20-21; 3:16-17).
31. "Before my God" is a reminder that God's evaluation is quite different from man's.
32. Man is impressed with the works of Protestantism but they sadly fall behind in quality and comprehensiveness.
33. Their works were sub par because they were incomplete and did not qualify as divine good production.
34. Their works were largely wood, hay and stubble.
35. Historical orthodox Protestant theology is deficient when it comes to the doctrine of Rebound and its implications with respect to divine good production.
36. If these people were led by the Spirit as they claim then they would be engaged in rigorous pursuit of the text within the biblically prescribed environment for spiritual matriculation.
37. Two occurrences of the inferential conjunction *oun* mark out the two options for Sardis in v.3.
38. The first introduces a call to take advantage of the solution to their corporate dilemma.
39. The remedy for their malaise leading to the rebuilding of the impressive spiritual fortress that once stood as a monument in their city is the command of v.3a.
40. The command to "remember" is not simply a bid to the readers to recall something from the past, but a command to keep in the forefront of their attention their rich spiritual heritage of the past as a motivation force in their restoration.
41. This local church was called upon to bear in mind (present imperative) what they had received and heard.
42. The change in tense between "have received" (perfect) and "heard" (aorist) is instructive.
43. Believers in this church had received a spiritual deposit and the spiritual deposit had come by hearing.
44. And so, "faith (active sense of GAP) comes by hearing (face-to-face teaching) and hearing by the Word of Christ" (content; Rom.10:17).
45. As out of it as they were, they still could recall the past and consider how far they had fallen.
46. Although the interrogative adverb *pos* regularly indicated manner ("how"), the connection with "keep it", which needs an object, suggests that it should be translated "what."

47. The present imperative “keep it” or “protect it” has as its subject the body of truth as taught among them in the past.
48. This could only be accomplished as the pastor reintroduced these doctrines to their spiritual frame of reference.
49. This command is not something that would be instantaneous by rather on-going.
50. Like “remember” this command in the prescription to spiritual resurgence is a present tense.
51. Next follows “repent” which is an aorist imperative.
52. Applied in this context it means that as they are reintroduced to their doctrinal heritage they are to change their thinking from religious human viewpoint to the divine viewpoint regarding those things that had died or were in the process of dying.
53. A believer who abandons face-to-face teaching for a period of time will experience this same thing.
54. As far as the whole counsel of God is concerned there were things that were on the verge of dying out and things that had disappeared from their spiritual radar.
55. As to the former, they were exhorted by the Lord to “strengthen” them: as to the latter, they are told to recall these things and hold on to them, all the while, in this process of reclamation, to change their thinking.
56. This then is a formula for reversion recovery.
57. Failure to implement this process constitutes the threat introduced in v.3b.
58. The earlier inferential conjunction *oun* (“therefore”) introduced the remedy for their religious reversionism.
59. The 2nd *oun* poses the threat that is predicated on the assumption that the remedy will not be accepted.
60. That a severe warning should follow so closely the prescription for spiritual restoration is somewhat surprising.
61. Apparently the Lord did not anticipate that this church would line up with His terms of reversion recovery.
62. Their present evil state was such, as indicated in v.1 and 2, that it was highly improbable that they would turn back to the full truth and ways of BD.
63. The action of the aorist verb is well portrayed in “If you do not wake up.”
64. This is the same verb (aor.subj. *gregoreo*) that opened this section on this prescription for recovery.
65. Being spiritually alert is in effect to be positive to BD.
66. If the first imperative in the formula for recovery and restoration is in place then Christ threatens to make a surprise visit as an opponent and not as an ally.
67. Christ’s coming as a thief to Sardis has been the object of the same two views as His threat to Ephesus (2:5).
68. One view sees His coming as a thief as a threat of special judgment upon Sardis.
69. The other view sees this as a judgment related to Christ’s eschatological arrival.
70. The metaphor of the inauguration of the day of the Lord as a thief usually applies to the unexpectedness of His appearing to humanity in the end times.
71. This metaphor is found in Matt.24:43; Lk.12:39; 1Thess.5:2; 2Pet.3:10; Rev.16:15.
72. This metaphor has been misused to indicate that the timing of the Lord’s coming cannot be ascertained and therefore it will be a surprise to all.
73. Actually His coming as a thief is a judgment upon all (believer and unbeliever alike) who are not alert and spiritually prepared (cf. Matt.24:43; 1Thess.5:2,4; 2Pet.3:10; Rev.16:15).

74. Obviously the day of the Lord will come as a thief to all who remain unbelievers, and their loss will entail even their souls.
75. That the day of the Lord will come as thief to believers seen 1Thess.5:1-11.
76. Only those who are informed with respect to “the times and the epochs” will that day not come upon them unawares.
77. It should be obvious that simply knowing the prophetic particulars regarding the Rapture generation is not enough to deliver the believer from loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ which immediately follows the translation of the Body of Christ.
78. The position that takes Rev.3:3b as a historical judgment upon Sardis akin to what we saw at Pergamum (2:16) and at Thyatira (2:22) seems to be preferable.
79. These all were local churches founded in accord with God’s perfect standards and were judged and blessed accordingly.
80. Ephesus was threatened with loss of identity, Pergamum’s antinomian crowd was threatened with violence, and Thyatira’s Jezebel following was threatened with pestilence, so it would follow that a surprise was in the offing for Sardis short of corporate reversion recovery.
81. A historical visitation must be in mind here since the eschatological appearing of the Lord is not dependent on the repentance of one church!
82. From the vantage point of Christ’s enemies His coming is as a thief in the night.
83. The unprepared individual will be surprised and will suffer loss.
84. The unprepared believer suffers shame and loss of reward at Christ’s coming.
85. The unbeliever losses his eternal soul.
86. The interpretation of the threat as a impending historical calamity (unk.) fits the pattern of churches number one, three, and four (cf. #7?).
87. The conditional clause of v.3b views their corporate recovery as dependent upon their willingness to abandon religious reversionism.